



Guidance

Primary education

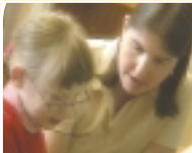
Teachers & Staffing

Headteachers, Teachers,
Governors, Support Staff
and LEA co-ordinators

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Working with Teaching
Assistants in Primary Schools



Purpose of this video

The purpose of this video is to promote discussion about good practice in the management of teaching assistants (TAs). It is aimed at headteachers, governors, teachers and other school staff, including TAs. It shows how a variety of schools around the country have raised the profile, and developed the roles and responsibilities, of their TAs. It emphasises the value of TAs in helping to raise standards of pupils' work and behaviour. And it shows that, irrespective of the type of school, effectively managed teaching assistants who are set clear objectives can play an important part in supporting teachers and schools to raise standards of pupil performance.

Background note

The number of support staff working in schools is growing fast – in January 2002 there were over 216,000, an increase of 81,000 since 1997. So is the variety – business managers, teaching assistants, lunchtime supervisors and learning mentors are just a few examples.

More and more schools have realised that investing in the training, management and monitoring of the work of their support staff has a significant impact on raising standards. This is consistent with the Government's plans for a remodelled school workforce, in which schools make use of a wider range of adults, each bringing their own skills and experience to enrich pupils' learning and to enable teachers to focus on those tasks where they can most add value.

In 2003-04 the Government will, through the Standards Fund, provide £268 million specifically for support staff salaries and £37.45 million for their training. Overall, schools will receive an additional £3 billion in revenue funding by 2005-06, after taking account of factors such as inflation, national insurance and pension contributions. This equates to over £70,000 for an average primary school, and schools will be able to draw on this to increase the numbers of and training for support staff.

A report by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), *Teaching Assistants in primary schools, an evaluation by Ofsted 2001/02*,

confirmed that, when managed well, teaching assistants bring considerable benefits to the classroom.

The report noted some key issues for schools to consider:

- make sure that, as the amount of learning support provided by teaching assistants increases, there is no reduction in the administrative, practical and welfare support that they have traditionally provided;
- develop strategies for managing effectively the increased numbers of teaching assistants, including in relation to SEN support;
- monitor the patterns of teaching assistants' work throughout the school and review the efficiency and effectiveness of their development;
- establish systems of appraisal for teaching assistants;
- ensure that all teaching assistants have knowledge and skills to work effectively with pupils;
- identify and disseminate good practice in working with teaching assistants;
- evaluate systematically the impact on pupils' achievement of support from teaching assistants.

Structure and content of the video

The video draws upon interviews with a number of headteachers, SENCOs, teachers, teaching assistants and LEA staff to explore a range of issues relating to the management of teaching assistants in schools. The interviews have been edited and arranged under the following broad headings:

- The role of the teaching assistant
- Planning and Reviewing
- Training, Mentoring and Personal Development
- Performance Management Appraisal.

Questions for discussion

Some issues you may like to discuss after viewing the video are:

- What is done in our school to make sure that our TAs are well managed?
- What can we do to further develop the role of our TAs?
For example:
 - Do we set time aside for TAs and teachers to plan and prepare work together and to review how lessons went?
 - Do we provide clear and relevant feedback to our TAs so that they can strengthen their performance and develop their roles?
- What issues arise when teachers and TAs work together? How can we deal with these in order to improve learning in the classroom?

In order to help these discussions a summary of some relevant case studies is set out in the remainder of this leaflet. Further case studies can be found at <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingassistants>



Further information

The DfES teaching assistant website at:

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingassistants>

'Time for Standards', which includes the consultation document

'Developing the role of school support staff':

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/remodelling>

Teaching Assistants in primary schools, an evaluation by Ofsted:

2001/02: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>

Employers Organisation (formally known as the LGNTO):

<http://www.lgnto.gov.uk>

Teacher Training Agency (TTA):

<http://www.canteach.gov.uk/home.htm>



The DfES thanks all those who took part in the filming of the video.

Grange First School, Harrow

Upton Primary Junior School, Macclesfield

Wray Common Primary School, Reigate

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Performance Management and Appraisal

Grange First School decided to focus on developing teaching assistants (TAs) and teacher partnerships in order to improve TAs' status in the school community and to foster effective teamwork.

To do this effectively, Grange First School started by updating job descriptions for their TAs with fixed targets to work towards. The school encouraged TAs to be involved in everyday lesson planning, record keeping and assessment processes; built non-contact time into their timetable in order to prepare resources; encouraged TAs to attend relevant meetings and provided access to whole school training days and other INSET sessions.

The school felt that it was important that TAs were given an opportunity to evaluate their own practice, and receive formal recognition of their hard work and achievements. The school therefore adapted the performance management system that had been successfully introduced for teachers, as this provided a model structure for the management of the process.

Once the principle of appraisal for TAs was discussed and agreed by all staff, the school built time into the working day at the end of the summer term, to accommodate a 45-minute meeting between each TA and the SENCO (as line manager). These meetings focused on curriculum, personal and whole school targets. The school also arranged for classroom observations of the TA to take place and for informal discussions on achievements. Further meetings were arranged with each TA during the autumn and spring terms to discuss progress and review their targets.

The school believes that this approach has improved teacher/TA partnerships; increased the confidence of TAs; highlighted their strengths and areas that need to be developed; increased the level of support for children's learning; and improved the management of pupils' social and emotional behaviour.

Training, Mentoring and Personal Development

At **Thameside Infant School** teaching assistants (TAs) are encouraged to develop their skills through a performance management assessment (PMA) system tailored both to their individual needs and to the school development plan. The PMA involves self-evaluation and mentoring and school staff support each other, both formally and informally, by acting as critical friends in the process.

Each TA is a certificated First Aider, with update training every three years. Nearly all the current TAs have gained Specialist Teacher Assistant status, while new recruits undergo a structured induction programme that prepares them for the Specialist Teacher Assistant Course.

Through professional development and the quality of individual contributions, TAs have gradually moved from their traditional role of supporting individual class teachers to using their skills across the school – for example: a TA using ICT expertise to share the role of ICT co-ordinator with a teacher; a TA attending training in literacy alongside a teacher and taking responsibility for working with groups of Year 1 pupils, planning and delivering literacy sessions focused on raising the attainment of identified groups of children; and a TA focusing on the needs of children for whom English is an additional language and becoming the named contact for the LEA in monitoring the school's EAL requirements. TAs also act as midday supervisors, which ensures that the school ethos and standards of behaviour are maintained during the lunch break. TAs at Thameside pride themselves on their work and readily take opportunities to share ideas and support the school.

Planning and Reviewing

At Wray Common Primary School an ICT teaching assistant (TA) has been appointed to work alongside teachers in a technical capacity. The TA attends Thursday afternoon planning sessions on a weekly basis alongside other school staff in the ICT Suite. At these meetings the TA and teacher discuss how well the lesson has gone and plan the next session directly onto the computer. The role of the TA is to offer technical or resource related advice on curriculum delivery, both in these planning meetings and at the end of each ICT lesson. The school have five sessions and three breaks during the school day, and feedback between the TA and class teachers normally takes place at the start of break, or during the teacher's non-contact time.

Positive outcomes in the school include: improved teacher confidence in delivery of the ICT curriculum and clearer perception of pupil progress, as a result of an improved dialogue between class teacher and TA.

Upton Priory Junior School is a mainstream school with a special designation to include pupils with physical disabilities. Currently there are 6 teaching assistants (TAs) who work closely as a team, learning how they can support the learning of each others' pupils, so that if one TA is away, the child can be cared for by another assistant.

The school decided to hold TA meetings to clarify job descriptions and over a period of time realised that the meetings were an extremely useful opportunity to talk through other support staff issues. The school soon took the decision to hold meetings on a weekly basis when assembly was taking place, under the guidance of the SENCO. The meetings are now used for forward planning e.g. cover for trips out of school and absent colleagues; discussing training opportunities; looking at skills needed to be able to offer effective support to individual pupils, and communication issues between teaching staff and TAs. Time is also set aside during the meeting to allow TAs to discuss any problems that they might have and to share some of the successes that have been achieved during the previous week. Minutes are taken at each meeting by the SENCO and issues that require action are followed up.

For the school, organised regular meetings reinforce the importance of team work and have boosted morale amongst the staff. The main outcomes are a more valued, organised and effective workforce within the school community.

The role of the teaching assistant

Castleton Primary School serves a socially deprived and challenging community. The school wanted to develop the role of its teaching assistants (TAs) to enable them to provide better support for teachers, pupils and the curriculum.

In consultation with the staff and governors the head has developed 16 key TA roles. Each class has two TAs who support individual pupils and small groups. This has allowed teachers to focus on teaching and learning and has led to improved pupil performance. At times, the more experienced and qualified TAs cover for the teacher in the class, for example during INSET training days. The class teacher plans and marks the work, and other teachers are on hand should they be needed. This provides a stable and consistent approach for the pupils – it ensures that cover is carried out by someone they know and who knows them.

All new support staff receive a two-week induction. During this time they work shadow colleagues and actively participate in class sessions. All support staff are offered continuous professional development (CPD). Support staff have a line manager and have meetings twice a term as a group, as well as attending whole staff meetings.

As the pupils come from a wide range of difficult community situations, the school is now seen as a 'Learning Haven'. The Senior Management Team describe the contribution of teaching assistants as 'the backbone for the work of the school'. They can see the benefits and ensure that it is a whole school approach, where all staff are valued and contribute effectively towards pupil learning and achievement.



Copies of this video can be obtained from:

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